

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Sanford D. Bishop, Jr. (GA-02) today co-chaired a Congressional Military Family Caucus briefing to discuss the growing epidemic of mental health issues among U.S. military spouses and children. Bishop, whose district includes Fort Benning and the Marine Corps Logistic Base – Albany, serves as co-Chair of the bipartisan Caucus along with Rep. Cathy McMorris-Rodgers, a Republican from the state of Washington.

“Often we recognize the sacrifices that members of our military make without being fully aware of the tremendous hardship that their families must endure,” Bishop said at today’s hearing. “The stress and anxiety caused by long absences, back-to-back deployments, and frequent transfers can unfortunately result in high rates of mental health illness among our military families.”

Since 9/11, studies have found that the psychological toll on service and family members has risen significantly. Last month, the New England Journal of Medicine published a report stating that wives of soldiers deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan between one and 11 months had an 18% higher rate of suffering from depression than those whose husbands did not go to war. When soldiers were deployed 11 months or longer, their wives had a 24% higher rate of suffering from depression. Additionally, children of deployed parents suffer more emotional issues, particularly if separations are long or if the parent at home is troubled.

Panelists at today’s hearing included Mrs. Kristi Kaufmann, an Army spouse who has seen firsthand the effects on families while serving as the battalion family readiness group leader for more than 600 family members; U.S. Army Brigadier General Loree Sutton, Director of the Center for Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury; Mr. David McIntyre, President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of TriWest Healthcare Alliance, which provides service and family members the online resources to access medical professionals; and Ms. Sherri Brown, Senior Vice President for service to the Armed Forces for the American Red Cross.

The Military Family Caucus was formed in 2009 to serve the interests of family members of the uniformed services by educating Members of Congress and their staff on the challenges that military families face on a daily basis.

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